(b) and (c) 33 Surveys including 2 in Rajasthan were included in Railway Budget 2007-08. Out of that 9 surveys have been completed. The further action on completed projects would be taken based on the decision on the survey reports.

Pending projects for gauge conversion in Tamil Nadu

*133. SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of projects which are pending for conversion from meter gauge to broad gauge in the State of Tamil Nadu;

(b) whether there is any delay in executing these projects;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether due to delay in execution of the above projects there was any cost escalation; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) to (e) As on 01.04.2007, 09 gauge conversion projects falling fully/partly in the State of Tamil Nadu were in various stages of progress. The projects are being progressed as per the availability of funds. There has been increase in cost of the projects due to price escalation that has taken place during the implementation phase and also due to change in scope and upgradation of track and signalling standards. The original cost of the projects with the latest anticipated cost is as under:—

Sl. No.	Project	Year of inclusion in the Budget	Length (in Kms)	Original Cost (Rs. in crore)	Latest Anticipated Cost (Rs. in crore)
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Tiruchchirappalli-Nagore-Karaikal (200 Kms) with extension to Nagapattinam-Velankanni-Tiruturaipundi *via* Tirukkuvalai (43 Kms)	1995-96	243	100	448.30
2.	Quilon-Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur & Tenkasi-Virudhunagar	1997-98	357	280	706.85
3.	Thanjavur-Villupuram	1998-99	192	223	362.33
4.	Tiruchchirappalli-Manamadurai	2000-01	150	175	435.50
5.	Villupuram-Katpadi	2000-01	161	175	275.84
6.	Manamadurai-Virudhunagar	2006-07	66.55	97.27	148.32
7.	Dindigul-Pollachi-Palghat & Pollachi-Coimbatore	2006-07	224.88	343.17	613.22

1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	Mayiladuturai-Thiruvarur-Karaikudi & Tiruturaipundi-Agastiyampalli	2007-08	224	404.19	404.19
9.	Cuddalore-Salem	1999-2000	191	198.68	336.57

Apart from the above mentioned projects, gauge conversion of Madurai-Bodinayakkanur has been proposed in the budget 2008-09.

Promotion of agricultural research

*134. DR. ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state what steps are being taken by Government to promote agricultural research in the country and what is the fund allocation for such research and how much of this is spent on promoting young agricultural scientists?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): Agricultural Research in the country is being promoted through National Agricultural Research System (NARS), which is composed of 42 State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and one Central Agricultural University and 95 Research Institutes. In addition, 61 All India Coordinated Research Projects and 16 Network Programmes area also in operation. These centres primarily address research in the field of Crop Science, Horticulture, Natural Resource Management, Agricultural Engineering, Animal Science, Fisheries and Extension. There are also 558 multidisciplinary centres called Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs) for assessment, refinement and demonstration of frontline technologies.

The focus of research programmes is to meet food and nutritional security of the country as well as making Indian agriculture globally competitive both cost and quality-wise, raising farm income thus improving quality of life of farmers, facilitating flow of knowledge and technology to farmers, and promoting sustainable use of our natural resources.

National Agricultural Innovation Project with the support of World Bank is also in operation with main objective to facilitate accelerated and sustainable transformation of Indian agriculture for enhancing productivity, profitability and livelihood security.

The fund allocated for research during 2008-09 is tentatively Rs. 1760 crore while it was Rs. 1620 crore during 2007-08. The XIth Plan fund allocation of DARE/ICAR is Rs. 12,023 crore against Rs. 5,368 crore during Xth Five Year Plan. The young scientists are encouraged to avail various scholarships/fellowships, study leave/sabbatical leave to continuously enhance their skills through specialized trainings. The budget allocation for research is made on the basis of schemes/projects as per their actual requirement and not on the basis of young or other scientists basis. However, in order to lay emphasis on getting good young scientists, the Department is funding all SAUs through its major scheme of Strengthening and Development of SAUs including scheme of establishing a Centre of Excellence in Niche area in each of the SAUs. The budget allocation for this scheme during 2007-08 was Rs. 310 crore while tentative allocation during 2008-09 is Rs. 347 crore.